Historical Bertie County, North Carolina Short Lines and Logging Railroads

Second Edition

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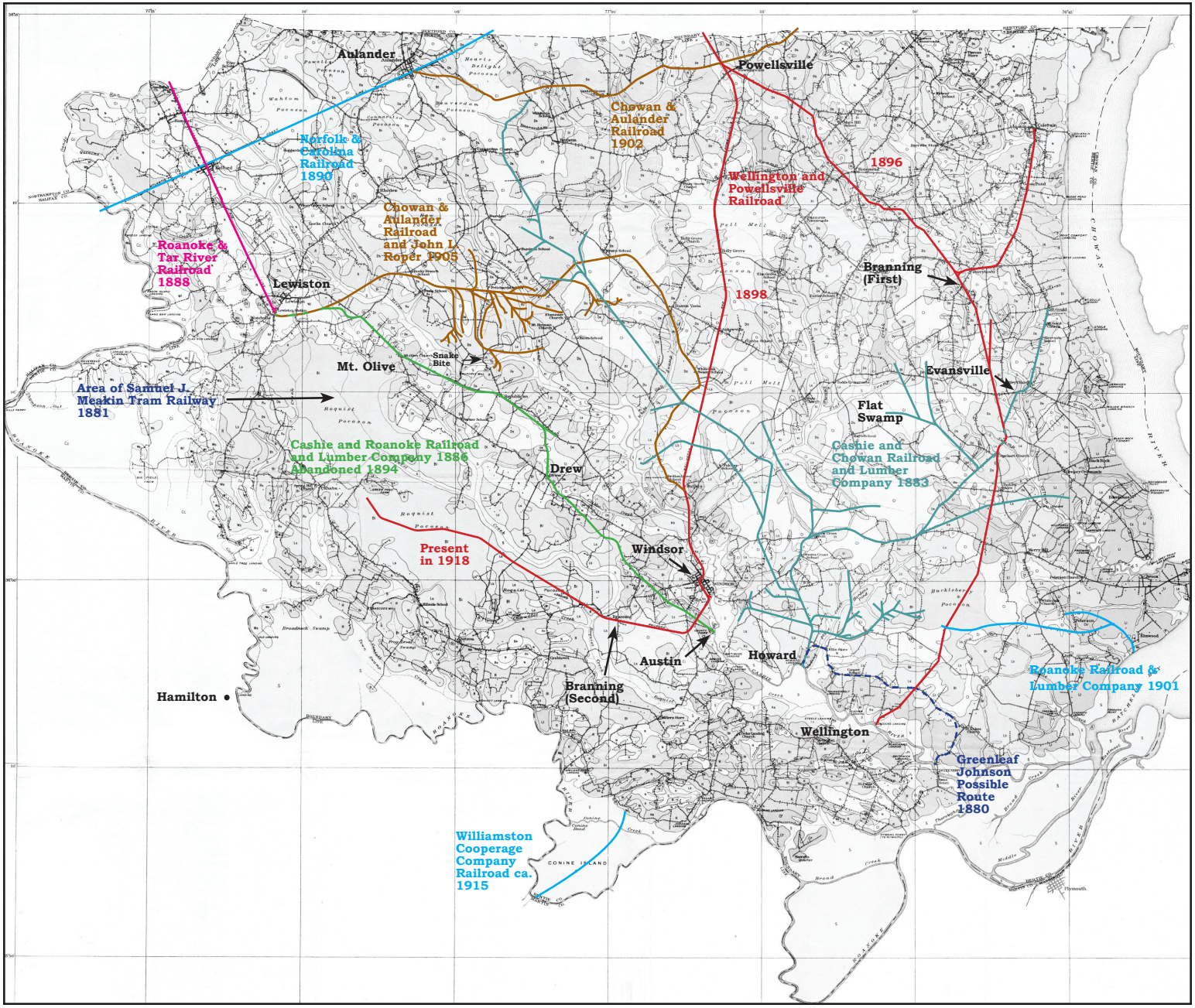
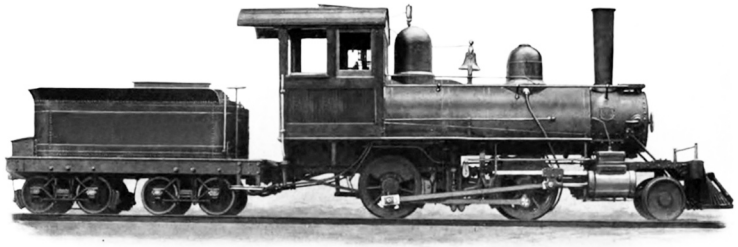
March 30, 2026



Bertie County, North Carolina Railroads with Initial Construction Dates



Preparation for the organization that would later be known as the **Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber Company** began in 1878 when Howard N. Johnson, along with John L. Roper, purchased timber rights on several parcels of land in Bertie County. The company was incorporated on March 7, 1883 by Duncan C. Winston, James J. Moore, Greenleaf Johnson, and two of his sons. In 1880, Greenleaf Johnson, Senior, lived in Baltimore with one of those sons, Greenleaf Junior. Howard N. Johnson was the other son. In 1880, he operated the Greenleaf Johnson Lumber Company's sawmill at Norfolk, Virginia.

The Johnsons' intention to log by rail in Bertie County was revealed in 1880. In April, "Greenleaf Johnson & Son" obtained a right-of-way for roads and tramways at Sans Souci (Bertie County Deed Book VV, page 313). The right-of-way crossed the property of the grantor, T. O. Vail, who previously purchased that tract from John Williams. The Johnsons were permitted to land logs there, on the bank of the Cashie River. In the same month, they obtained the right to remove timber from, and a right-of-way across, certain land to the north of Sans Souci. That parcel was owned by John and Mary Williams (Deed Book VV, page 314). It was known as "The Langdale Tract," which adjoined land owned by Daniel Cooper and was part of "The John Cooper Tract." It was further described as "north and west of the Merry Hill Road and north and east of the Jacock's Road." "J. Williams" and "John Cooper" can be seen on part of an 1863 map shown in Figure 1, which was created by the Confederate Engineer Bureau in Richmond, Virginia. At least at the onset, the right-of-way described here must

1 1863 Site of Sans Souce nee Jno. Cooper Landing

have been a tram railway powered by animals, rather than a steam railroad, for the deed on page 314 provides that "All the manure raised and made from the team while using said right of way to belong to said parties of the first part [John and Mary Williams] to be removed by them at their expense."

After its incorporation on March 7, 1883, the 1895 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* reports that the **Cashie and Chowan Railroad** was formally organized on October 30, 1883.

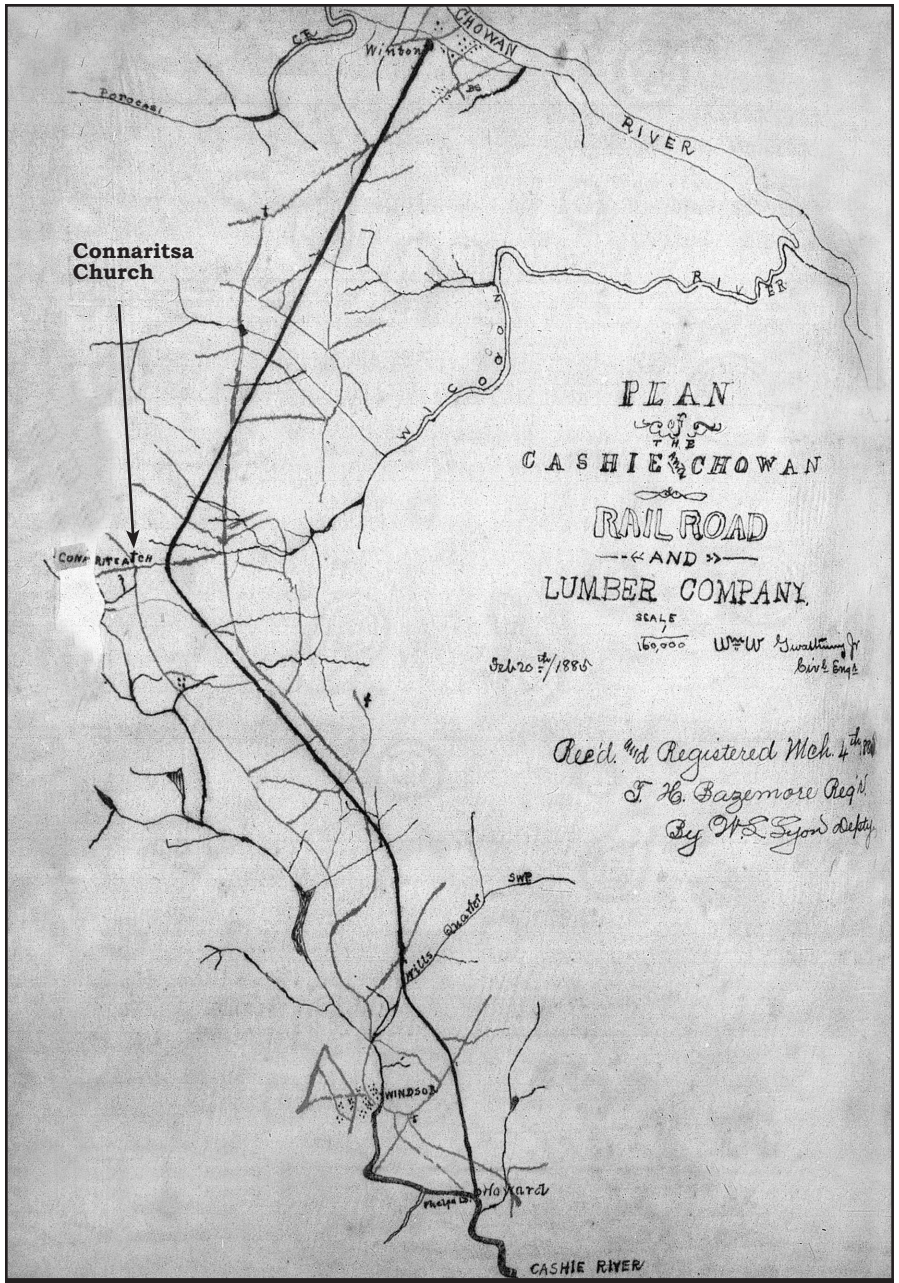
By the middle of 1883, the railway at Sans Souci had acquired three steam engines (see the following paragraph). The existing line was used to move track material and rolling stock to the place which later was known as Howard. Howard would become the southern terminal of the Cashie and Chowan Railroad. Describing the situation as it had existed in 1883, the March 1, 1884 Raleigh *News & Observer* noted that: "There is a road from Sans Souci, Bertie County, to a point some miles west. No information in regard to it can be had here, and is desired." However, as reported in an 1884 article published in *Railroad Gazette*, to be presented later in this article, the railroad at Sans Souci had already been pulled up by the time this *News & Observer* article appeared.

Describing the operation at Sans Souci, Raleigh's May 23, 1883 *The Farmer and Mechanic* reported on page 4: "Messers. Greenleaf Johnson and Son are doing an extensive business getting timber. . . . They have 12 miles [of] R. R., 3 locomotives, 3 steamboats, and an aggregate of steam power at mills of 535 horse power. The logs were cut here in N. C. [and] hauled from 3 to 7 miles over [the] R. R., put in Cashie River and Simon Creek, 'rafted' and then 'tugged' to Norfolk, 200 miles, before cut into lumber. . . . They are building a road now in Chowan [the author believes that Chowan is a misstatement] and Bertie counties which will eventually connect Windsor on Cashie with Winton on Chowan, a distance of 35 miles."

The author could not, with confidence, locate a "Simon Creek" in Bertie County. It might have been the locally used name for a waterway located on the property of D. L. Simon. In the 1880 census of Windsor Township, this Simon family lived on the east side of the township. In January 1883, the widow of D. L. Simon sold a right-of-way for railroads and tramroads to Greenleaf Johnson (Bertie County Deed Book 54, page 106). Another possibility is that "Simon Creek" was a misspelling of Salmon Creek, a waterway located northeast of Sans Souci.

The April 4, 1884 *Railroad Gazette* summarized the progress of construction of the new line that was being built the year before: "**North Carolina Lumber Roads.**-In the list of these roads which we published recently, taken from the Raleigh *News and Observer*, mention was made of a road running from Sans Souci in Bertie County, of which information was desired. This information has now been received and is to the effect that the road was taken up some time ago, but the material was used in building another lumbering road owned by the firm of Greenleaf Johnson & Sons, as follows: *Chowan & Cashie*-This new road extends from a point on the Cashie River in Bertie County, which has been named Howard [after Howard N. Johnson], northward 8 miles into Hertford County. It is 3 ft. 6 in. gauge and is used for hauling lumber. The owners have a charter for the extension of the line to Winton, N. C. Mr. Howard Johnson, of Berkeley, acts as manager of the road."

Figure 2 is a map produced in 1885 and preserved on page 540 of Bertie County Deed Book 55. It reveals the right-of-way envisioned for the railroad a couple of years after it went into operation. Two visible terminals were at Howard (on the Cashie River, in the south) and Winton (in the north, on the Chowan River in Hertford County). The right-of-way led northwest from Howard, eventually paralleling a road which corresponds to modern-day Early Station Road. It reached Hexlena Road at a place approximately 4,000 feet east of Highway 305. The author



2 1885 Route Map of the Cashie and Chowan Railroad

discovered no aerial photographic evidence suggesting that the railroad was extended north of that location. No deeds having the Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber Company or Greenleaf Johnson, as grantee, were recorded in Hertford County. This railroad clearly did not reach Winton.

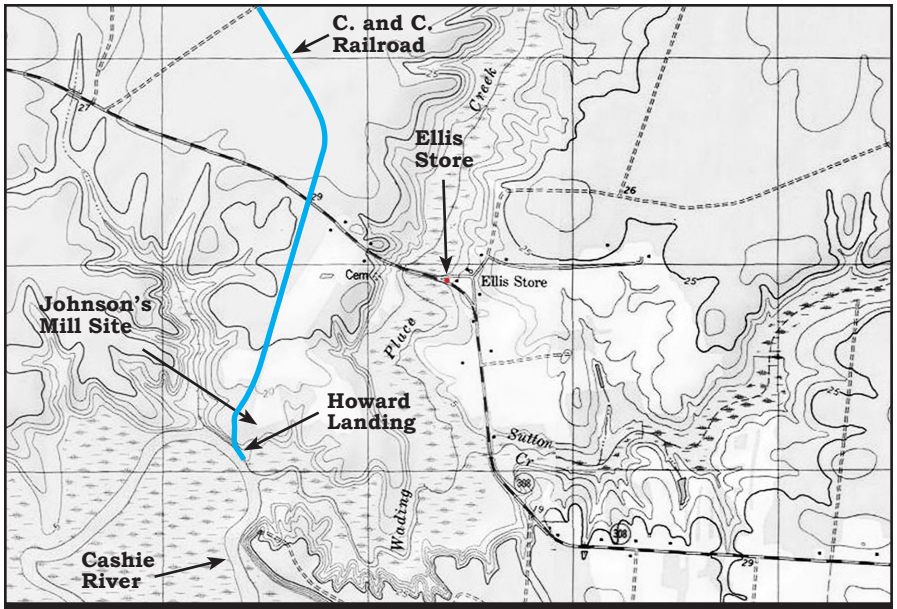
The January 24, 1907 *Windsor Ledger* narrates additional early history of this company: "The Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber Company, located at Howard, four miles from Windsor, down the Cashie River, is a branch of the Greenleaf Johnson Lumber Company, which company represents a capital investment of three and one half million dollars.

"The late Greenleaf Johnson first came to this county and located this plant in 1882. . . . Two hundred men it takes to operate the mill and road and those two hundred men are paid six thousand dollars per month. The mill cuts nine million feet of timber in the course of the year, which is shipped to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Norfolk. [A] Few days ago, a handsome order was filled for a firm in Hamburg, Germany.

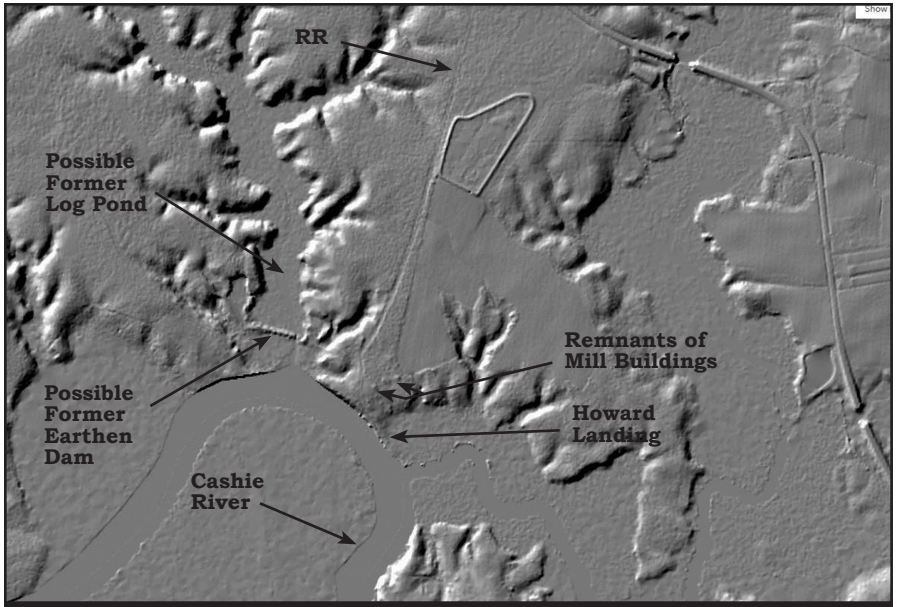
"Two locomotives, making three trips in the log woods per day, together with raft logs purchased on the river, supply the mill [in 1907]. At present, timber is being hauled out of Colerain township, the trains going within four or five miles of the town of Colerain. The company also has timber in the townships of Merry Hill, Windsor, Whites, Mitchell, and Snakebite, enough to last three years, cutting every day.

"The railroad is three and a half feet gauge. . . . The official store of the C. & C. R. R. & L. Co. at Howard, is owned and operated by Mr. J. J. Ellis, a native of Surry County, Va."

The map displayed in Figure 3 is the result of correspondence with people familiar with the history of the region near Howard. That community was in close



3 Geography in the Region of Johnson's Mill



4 LiDAR Ground Image in the Region of Johnson's Mill

proximity to Johnson's mill. Several stores were in that vicinity: Baker's Store ca. 1888, J. B. Nicholls' Store ca. 1890, H. D. Miller's Store ca. 1891, and starting in 1907, the store of John J. Ellis. The Ellis Store became known as the mill's official store. However, at the time the mill at Howard closed (about 1912), Ellis moved his store to a new location, on the county road between Windsor and Merry Hill. There, from J. Green and his wife, he purchased a property known as the "E. C. Baker old store lot" and store. The transaction was dated December 9, 1911 and recorded on page 296 of Bertie County Deed Book 160.

Figure 4 is a recent LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) image of the surface of the ground in the area where the mill existed. Gerald W. Thomas, who grew up in Bertie County, visited that area several years ago during a time when the Cashie River was unusually low. He found that remnants of Howard Landing were visible due to the temporary condition of the river. On land, bricks from the mill could be seen.

In Figure 4, an apparently man-made feature is visible northwest of the mill site. Local correspondents had no recollection of a dam or log pond being used in conjunction with the mill. However, such features were commonly utilized at larger sawmills in the era when this mill operated. The author was unable to personally confirm or refute the notion that one of the features seen in Figure 4 represented the remains of a dam.

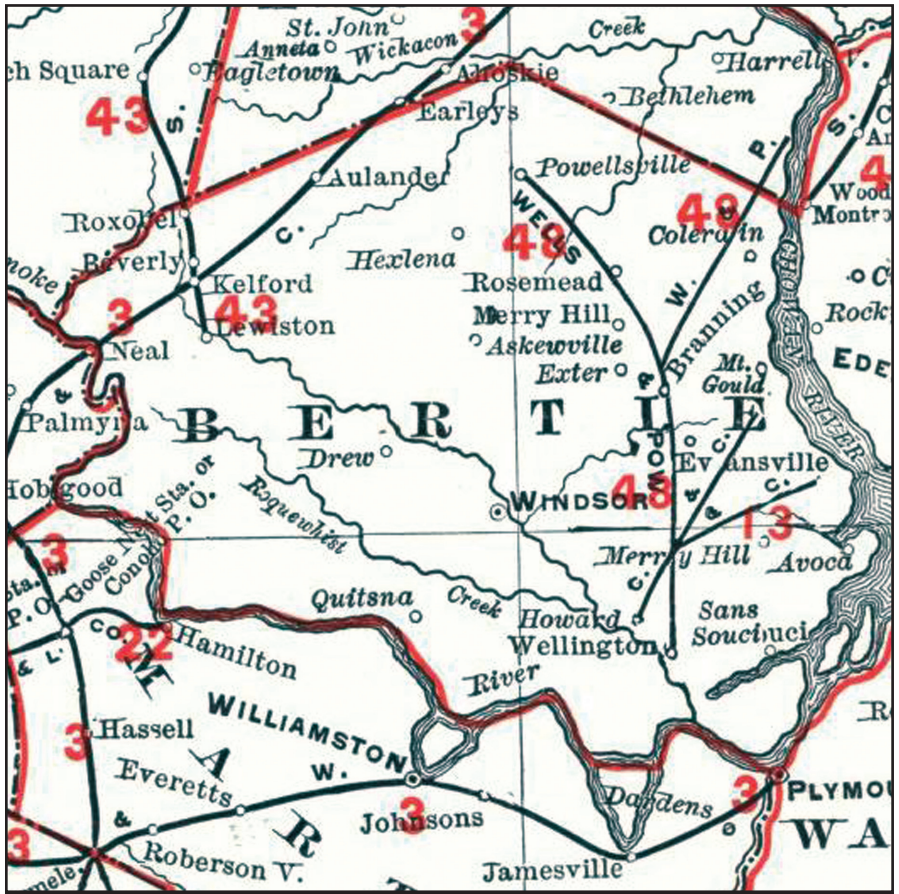
Beginning in 1884, various yearly editions of *Poor's Directory of Railway Officials* and *Poor's Manual of Railroads* provide limited insight into the track plan of the railroad as it evolved over the years.

The 1884 through 1889 editions of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* show a mainline of 8 miles with a terminal at Howard.

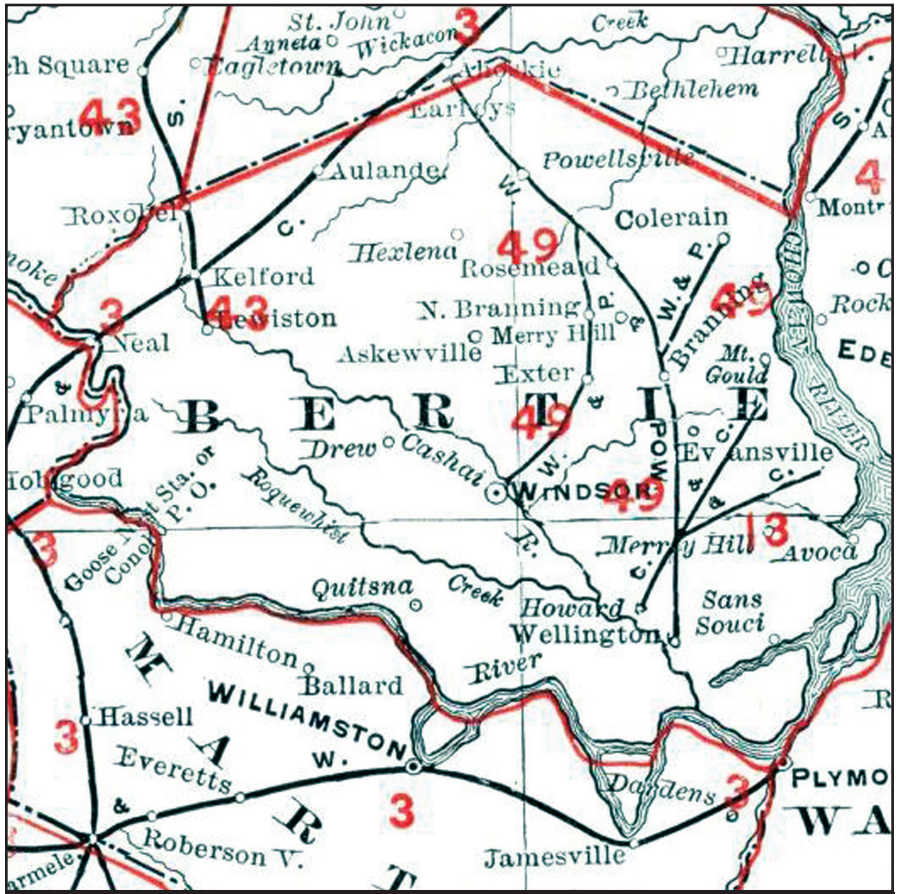
The 1887 edition of *Poor's Directory of Railway Officials* records 30 total miles of track for the railroad and states that the company operated in Bertie and Chowan Counties (The activity in Chowan County may have been carried on by the company's steamboat fleet). In the mid-1880s, Moses Todd, Emma E. White, J. R. Jernigan, and other land owners granted the railroad the right to build its right-of-way through their land. Branches were constructed reaching areas of the county east of the originally constructed mainline.

The 1892 and 1893 editions of the *Directory* report the total length of the railroad as 35 miles, all in Bertie County.

In 1894, the *Manual* narrates "Cashie and Chowan RR.-Howard, N. C. to Cashie River, 22 miles; branches, 8 miles; 4 locomotives and 50 logging cars." A location for the end of the mainline, 22 miles northwest of Howard, is compatible with the region of the Cashie River headwaters. Such a configuration is consistent with the map displayed in Figure 2. Features are visible in aerial



5 1896 Map Showing W. & P. RR and C. & C. RR



6 1900 Map Showing Line from Windsor to Powellsville

photographs of that area from the early 1950s which may represent that right-of-way. That information was considered when drawing the county map on page 1, at the beginning of this paper.

Probably because it was an industrial railroad, as opposed to a common-carrier line, the Cashie and Chown Railroad did not appear in the numerous pre-1896 North Carolina maps reviewed by the author. Figure 5 is part of a Rand, McNally and Company map of North Carolina produced in 1896. Here, the logging railroad is designated as "C. & C." Most of the original mainline of the railroad was not shown on this map. Visible here is the contemporaneous right-of-way of the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad, which had just been completed in 1896.

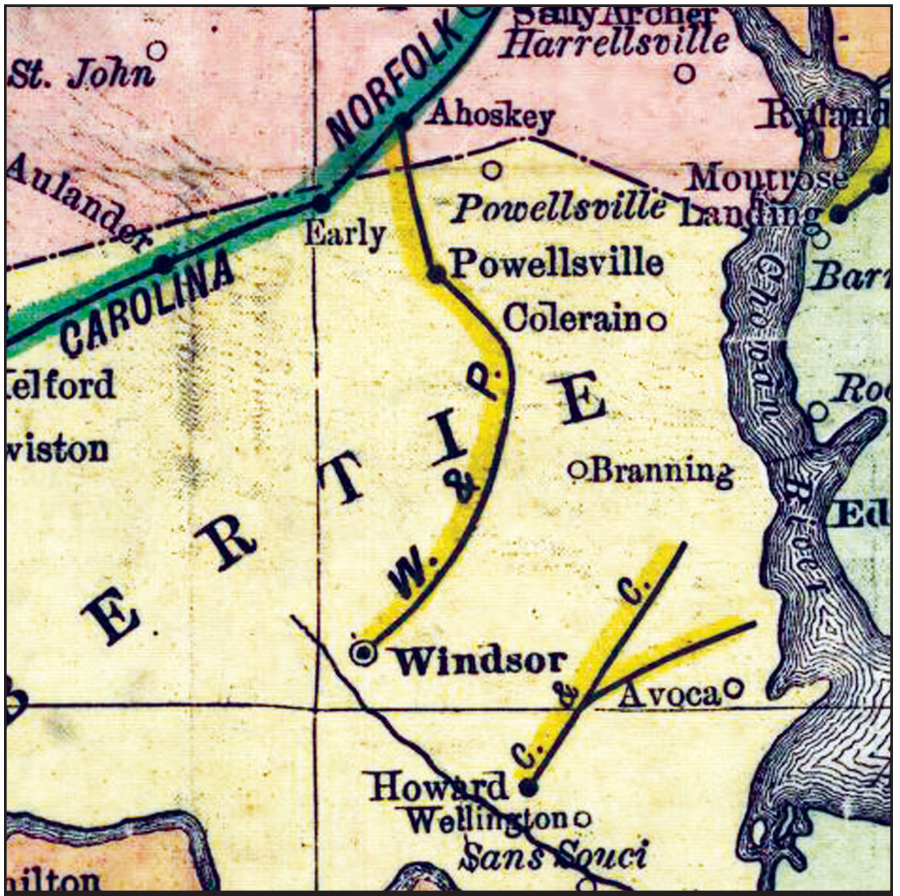
The Cashie and Chowan Railroad was described in the 1896 and 1897 *Manual* as: "Howard, N. C. toward Cashie River, 19 miles; total track, 29 miles." In 1898, the *Manual* noted: "Howard, N. C., to Swamps, 22 miles; total track, 29 miles." In the 1899 *Manual*: "Howard, N. C., to Swamps, 22 miles."

Figure 6 comes from the 1900 version of the Rand, McNally and Company map presented in Figure 5. The Cashie and Chowan Railroad is represented with the same configuration as in 1896, while the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad added a new line entering Windsor. The 1900 *Railroad Map of North Carolina*, represented in part by Figure 7, suggests that by that year, the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad had abandoned its original line from Wellington to Powellsville.

Figure 8 is part of a 1901 Rand McNally and Company map. The number "24" represents parts of the Cashie and Chowan Railroad which were operating at that time.

From 1901 to 1903, the *Manual* reports: "Howard, N. C., to Swamps, 15 miles." In 1901, the Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber company purchased several properties, along with rights-of-way, from the Branning Manufacturing Company (which had previously operated its own railroad between Wellington and Powellsville). The purchase was recorded on page 198 of Deed Book 109.

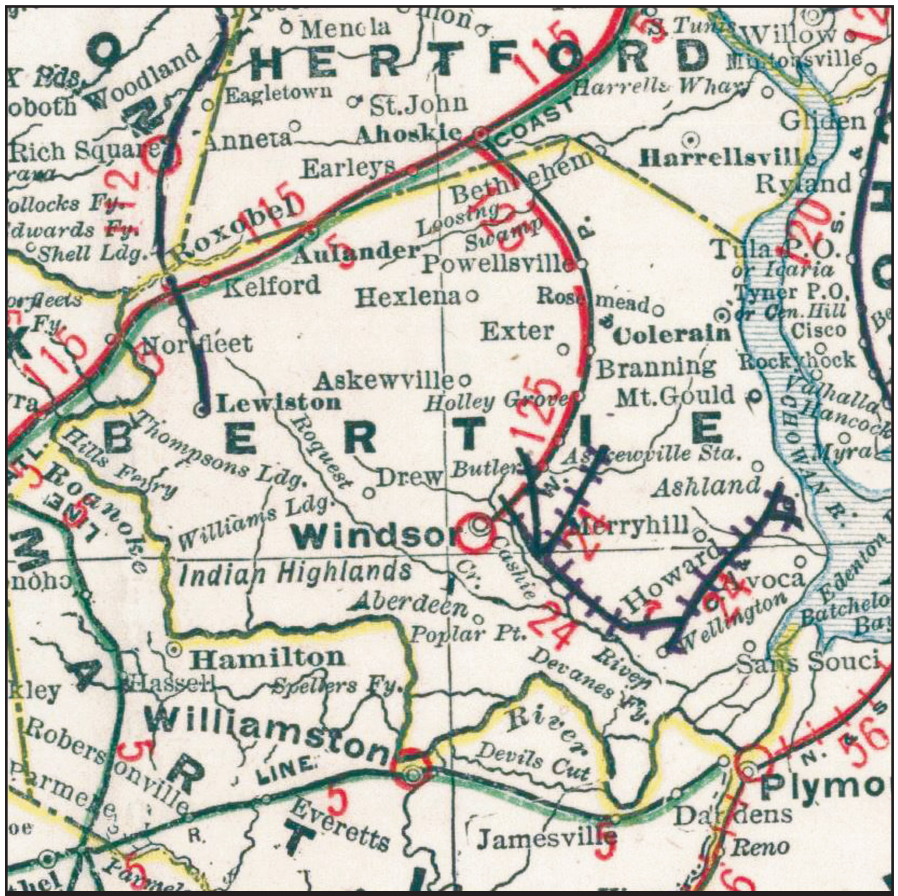
Figure 9 is part of a 1901 map produced by Tunison. It is evident that then, the original Wellington and Powellsville Railroad right-of-way, between those two communities, was being operated by the Cashie and Chowan Railroad (identified as "C. & C.").



7 1900 Original W. and P. Grade Abandoned

The 1904 through 1907 *Manual*: "Howard, N. C., to timber lands, 7 miles; spurs, etc., 6 miles-total, 13 miles." The *Manual* listed 9 miles of railroad in 1909 and 1910, and 6 miles in 1912. The *Twelfth Annual Report of the North Carolina Corporation Commission for the Year ending December 31, 1910* reports only 2.5 miles of mainline in operation, and the 1911 version had no listing at all for the railroad.

David L. Jennette writes, in *The Windsor Story 1768 – 1968*, that "Greenleaf Johnson ceased operations in Bertie County in 1912 and moved the entire outfit to Norfolk, Virginia. Shortly after this, Foreman-Blades Lumber Company of Elizabeth City purchased Johnson's holding. Forman-Blades, about 1927, began operating several portable mills on the property along the rail lines. . . . In the 1930's, Forman-Blades phased out the portable mills and railroads. Because of the new bridge across the Chowan River and improved roads, they began



8 1901 C. and C. RR Labelled "24"

9 1901 C. and C. Using Abandoned W. and P. Grade

hauling logs by truck off their land to the Elizabeth City plant." Parts of this narrative are called into question because the Forman-Blades Lumber Company first obtained real estate in Bertie County in 1906, when it was the grantee of the Elizabeth City Lumber Company properties in Bertie County (Book 138, page 378). However, assets of the Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber Company were not purchased by Forman-Blades until 1922 (Book 223, pages 517 and 518). An article in the July 6, 1923 edition of Elizabeth City, North Carolina's *The Independent* suggests that Roscoe Forman, associated with the Forman-Blades Lumber Company, had developed a logging engine for use in the woods. He invented a set of gears which turned a Ford touring car into a logging locomotive. This suggests that the Forman-Blades operation in Bertie County used trucks for log transport, rather than a railroad.

The **Cashie and Roanoke Railroad and Lumber Company** was incorporated on March 4, 1885 by James A. Church, John L. Roper and five others. It planned to build a narrow-gauge railroad from "a point at or near Hill's Ferry, on the Roanoke River in Bertie County, to a point on the Cashie River at or near Simmons' Landing in Bertie County." Its charter was amended to rename the corporation as the **Cashie and Roanoke Railroad Company** on February 1, 1887. Simmons' Landing remained as one terminal, but Lewiston was named as the other end of the line. The March 17, 1887 issue of Winston-Salem's *The Weekly Sentinel* reported: "The Cashie and Roanoke Railroad is completed to Lewiston, Bertie County."

The company milled its harvested timber at a community which grew up south of Windsor. Located on the Cashie River at the place formerly known as Simmon's Farm or Simmon's Landing, the mill town was called Austin. That place is now the site of the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail, at the southeast end of Poor Farm Road.

Figure 10 is part of an 1887 Cram map which shows "C. & R. R. R." stretching from Lewiston to the Windsor area. The railroad headed northeast from Lewiston before turning southeast, passing southwest of Windsor to reach Austin. Figure 11 is part of a 1956 aerial photograph showing the area immediately northeast of Lewiston. The still-visible mainline right-of-way is indicated by green arrows, while a subsequently (1905) constructed Chowan and Aulander Railroad grade is indicated by brown arrows.

10 1887 Route of the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad

11 1951 Aerial Photograph at Lewiston

12 Cashie and Roanoke RR Terminal at Austin

The Cashie and Roanoke Railroad had intermediate station stops at communities named Drew and Mt. Olive. The November 30, 1887 *Windsor Ledger* reported: "**Steamer Currituck. Two Trips A Week Between Norfolk And Windsor.** Leaving Norfolk every Monday and Thursday. Returning will leave Windsor every Tuesday and Saturday. Connections made at Austin with C. and R. R.R. to Drew's Station, Mt. Olive, Lewiston and all points reached by this road."

Figure 12 is an undated photograph of the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad's Austin terminal, on the Cashie River. This image has appeared previously in *"The Windsor Story" 1768 – 1968*.

At the time when the railroad entered Lewiston, no other line served that community. But in 1888, the **Roanoke & Tar River Railroad** (later a part of the **Seaboard Air Line Railway**) was extended to Lewiston from the northwest. It offered direct rail connections to the rest of the country's rail system and as a result, non-timber related traffic on the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad dwindled. Gerald W. Thomas writes in *Bertie County Railroads in the Nineteenth Century* , available at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/bertie/history/other/bertieco276gms.txt> : "Cashie and Roanoke Railroad trains were run to and from Lewiston 'at ruinous loss.' [James A.] Church reportedly 'used every means to stimulate patronage' for his railroad, but 'without effect.' He continued to provide rail service to Lewiston until November 1889, when he had company workers take up two miles of track running into the town . . ." That connection to Lewiston was never reestablished.

The internet source <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40995417/john_wellington_branning> accessed January 1, 2025 reports that John Wellington Branning and his brother, Clarence E. Branning

settled in Edenton, Chowan County, in the spring of 1888. Reportedly, the Branning's lumber business in Philadelphia had become stagnant and the brothers sought greener pastures in the South. They formed the Branning Manufacturing Company which, late in 1889, gained control of a lumbering enterprise at Austin.

On December 28, 1889, the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad Company and James A. Church sold all the company's standing timber, most of the real estate formerly known as Simmon's Farm, and a barge named "Gilberton" to the Branning Manufacturing Company. The sale price was $185,000. Numerous items located at Austin were excluded from the sale, consisting of rolling stock, railroad track, switches, branches, rights-of-way, blacksmith shop, the depot at Austin and the five acres immediately around the depot, which also contained the company's dock and terminal premises (recorded in Deed Book 67, page 144).

It is unclear why the sale described in the previous paragraph was structured such that numerous parts of the railroad were not included. Possibly, the Branning Manufacturing Company wanted to avoid litigation regarding the withdrawal of rail service to Lewiston, which had occurred just one month before the sale took place. But from a practical standpoint, beginning in 1890, the Branning Manufacturing Company owned and operated the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad.

The Branning Manufacturing Company continued harvesting its remaining timber via the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad and by 1892, the eventual exhaustion of that timberland was foreseen. In a deed dated April 12, 1892 (Deed Book 74, page 426), the Branning Manufacturing Company, along with the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad Company, sold a 306-acre tract of land to the Commissioners of Bertie County. The property was "formerly known as the Simmons Farm and now known as Austin, adjoining the land of H. W. Lyons, the Gray land, A. S. Roscoes Holden land, the Cashie River, and the Cashie Neck road . . . "

The grantors retained "the right to use until January 1, 1894 all the railroad tracks and all the buildings and structures at and near the depot at Austin and the ground occupied by the track and by the buildings and structures at and near said depot except the two dwelling houses and three negro quarters, for the purpose of the business of said companies, and the right to remove from said premises the engine and car sheds and two ware houses upon the wharf and all rail tracks, iron, rolling stock and machinery on said farm belonging to said companies, and the right to use the river front two hundred feet back for the purpose of getting out the sunken logs in the log pound or pond and to use the same river front not longer than January 1, 1895 [one year after the previously mentioned January 1, 1894], the sawdust from the said logs, if sawed there, to be put into the swamp and not on the high land."

Thus, the Branning Manufacturing Company was already in the process of phasing out its Austin operation when the full effect of the Panic of 1893 was felt. At the same time, it was also building a separate right-of-way farther east, at a new community named Wellington. The September 5, 1893 issue of *The Progressive Farmer*, taken from the *Windsor Ledger*, reported: "We learn that the Branning Manufacturing Company has shut down all its work including the mills at Edenton and the C. & R. R.R. *at Wellington* [author's italics]. Owing to the stringency in the lumber market, a large number of men are thrown out of employment." Later, in 1895, the February 8 issue of *Railroad Gazette* reported that during 1894, the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad had abandoned fifteen miles of its line in Bertie County. This was the residual track at Austin.

The community of Wellington was located on the north side of the Cashie River at a place known formerly as Jacock's (or sometimes, Jaycock's) Landing. It was named in honor of John Wellington Branning. Construction on the initial right-of-way (which thereafter became the **Wellington and Powellsville Railroad** after it was chartered in October 1893) was begun at Wellington by the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad. On October 23, 1893, the newly chartered line acquired that right-of-way from the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad (Bertie County Deed Book 80, page 155).

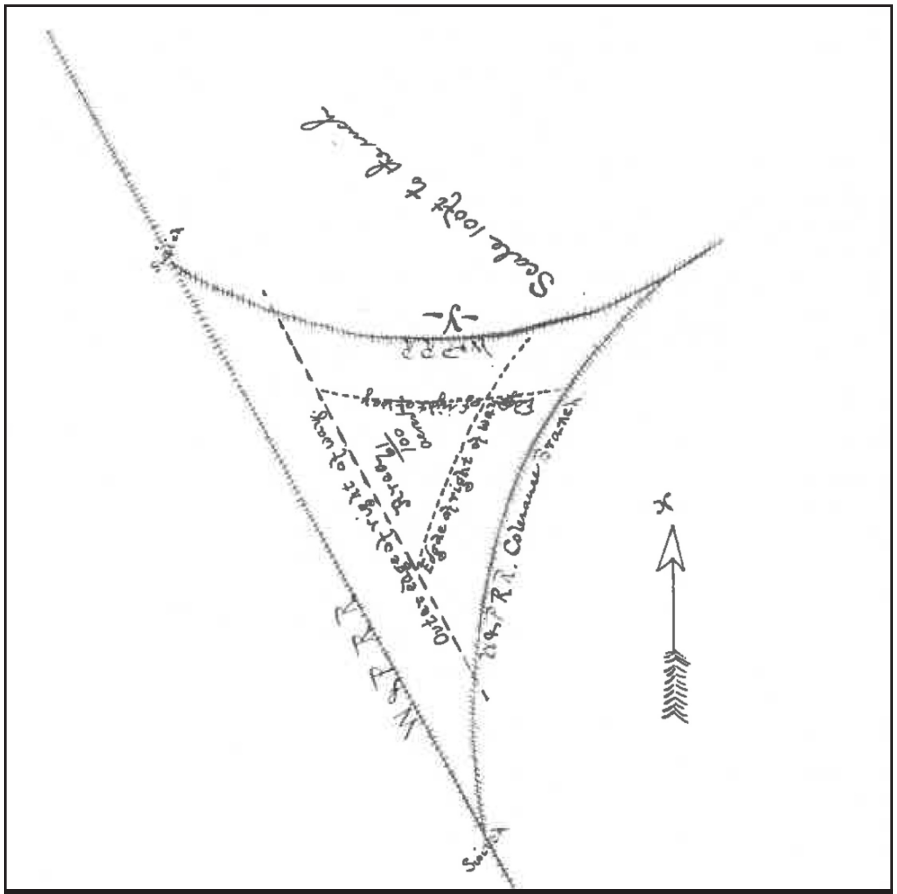
The purchased assets were: "the road bed of said Cashie and Roanoke Railroad Company from Wellington in Bertie County to Biggs Mill in same county being about ten miles, all of its terminal buildings, stations, docks, (and other items) its – switches being about twenty, its – rails consisting of about eight hundred forty eight (848) tons of twenty pound steel rails [enough for about 7.5 miles of track], its – splice joints – consisting of eleven thousand eight hundred eighty 11,880, its – spikes being about forty eight thousand six hundred (48,600) pounds, its – right of way its – locomotives consisting of three its – logging cars consisting of forty five (45) its flat cars consisting of three (3) & its- passenger coach."

It is possible that the ten miles of right-of-way were merely graded and the rest of the track material and rolling stock might still have been at Austin, awaiting transfer to Wellington, if not already at Wellington. The exact location of Biggs Mill could not be determined. However, a location ten miles north of Wellington would correspond to a point approximately 0.5 mile north of the junction of modern-day Highway 45 and Jeff White Road.

Acquisition of the right-of-way for the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad required crossing the preexisting Cashie and Chowan Railroad in at least one place. The management of the C. and C. did not want to allow the crossing and filed suit against the W. and P., accusing it of incorporating solely for the purpose of condemning private property. The case was heard in New Bern on December 6, 1893 and the right of the W. and P. to cross the C. and C. was affirmed. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court of North Carolina, where the ruling was again upheld (North Carolina Reports, February 1894, Volume 114, page 424 - <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-reports-1894-february-v.114/128249?item=332167>).

The July 11, 1895 *Windsor Ledger* reported under "Merry Hill Mumblings" that "The new train is out on the road. She came out today to try the road to see how she can run. They can put logs in at Wellington now."

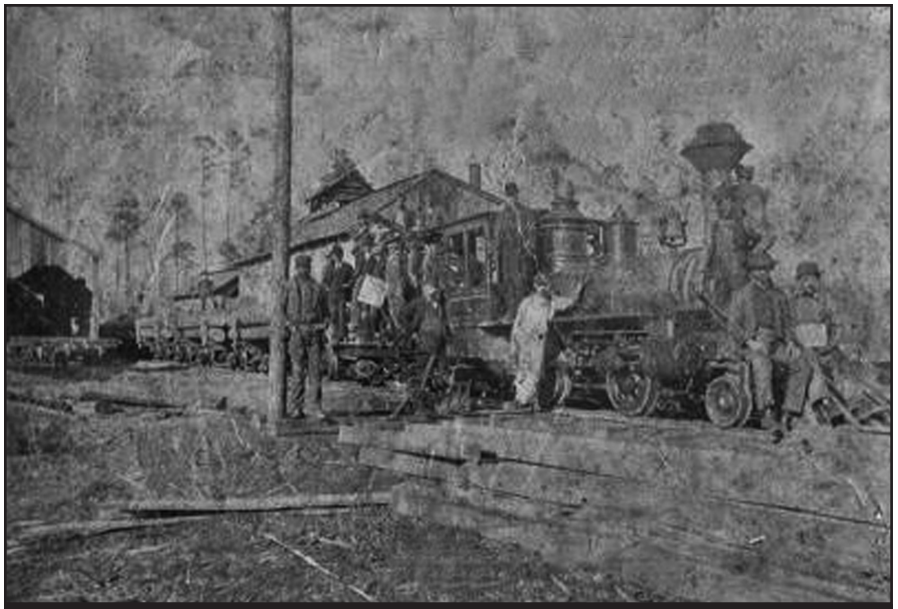
Another snag in construction of the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad occurred in the region of Perrytown. The railroad wished to cross land owned by the heirs of Jeremiah M. Perry (Perry had died on July 2, 1884, leaving several children under the age of 21). The situation was complicated by the fact that a guardian for the underage children had not yet been appointed. The heirs (the plaintiffs) did not wish to grant a right-of-way across their collective property. The case was presented to the Bertie County Superior Court in September 1895 and a map of the property in question was included in court papers, then filed in Bertie County Deed Book 86, page 578. That map appears in Figure 13. Note that the railroad's branch line to Colerain was to join the mainline at the property under consideration. The case was finally decided on January 20, 1896 and the right-of-way was granted. However, the heirs were awarded $225 in



13 1895 Map of W. and P. RR and Branch to Colerain

compensation. Figure 14 is a photograph from this area, labelled: "Brandon [perhaps a misspelling of 'Branning'] Station – Perrytown railroad stop - 1896 was now on land owned by Tom Slade & Clyde's shop." Note the engine house on the left.

The 1896 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* includes information about the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad: "*Completed*, [as of] June 30, 1895: Wellington to Branning, N. C., 18 miles; *branch*, Dukesville to



14 1896 Photograph at Branning, near Perrytown

Coleraine, N. C. 8.5 miles – total 25.5 miles. Gauge, 3 feet. . . . At present used chiefly as a logging road; on its completion to Powellsville will be opened for public use." W. W. Duke, who resided at Branning, NC, was the Chief Engineer. Note that the branch to Colerain originated at a place the railroad called "Dukesville," rather than at "Branning." James A. Church was a member of the Board of Directors.

In 1897, the *Manual* reported: "*Completed*, [as of] June 30 1896: Wellington toward Powellsville, N. C., 22 miles. Sidings, 6 miles. . . . It is intended to take up the line from Wellington to Powellsville, as that part was built chiefly for logging purposes, and to build a line from Powellsville to Windsor, and from Powellsville to Ohoskie [sic]."

The 1898 *Manual* reported: "*Completed*, [as of] December 31, 1897: Wellington to Powellsville, N. C., 22 miles. Sidings, 6 miles. . . . Construction is now [January, 1898] nearly completed on a line from Ahoskie to Windsor, N. C., connecting at the former place with the Atlantic Coast Line."

From the April 29, 1898 *Railroad Gazette*: "Rails have been laid from Windsor, N. C., to Powellsville, 16 miles, on this line from Windsor north to Ahoskie, and this part of the road is being operated." The October 21, 1898 of the same publication reported that the line had been completed between Windsor and Ahoskie and was opened for business on September 15, 1898.

The Wellington & Powellsville Railroad Company is included in Valuation Docket 689 of Interstate Commerce Commission Reports. It appears on pages 253 through 266 of Volume 114. Page 259 notes: "In addition to the present road owned, the carrier constructed, during the period 1894-1898, about 16 miles of road between Wellington and Powellsville, all of which was abandoned about 1898."

The railroad's right-of-way between Wellington and Powellsville was operated for just a few years before being abandoned. The exact path used by that line, between Taylors Store Road in the south and Powellsville in the north, was difficult to map out with certainty. The route shown on the map at the beginning of this presentation results from analysis of aerial photography from 1938, historical statewide maps, and various other sources of information.

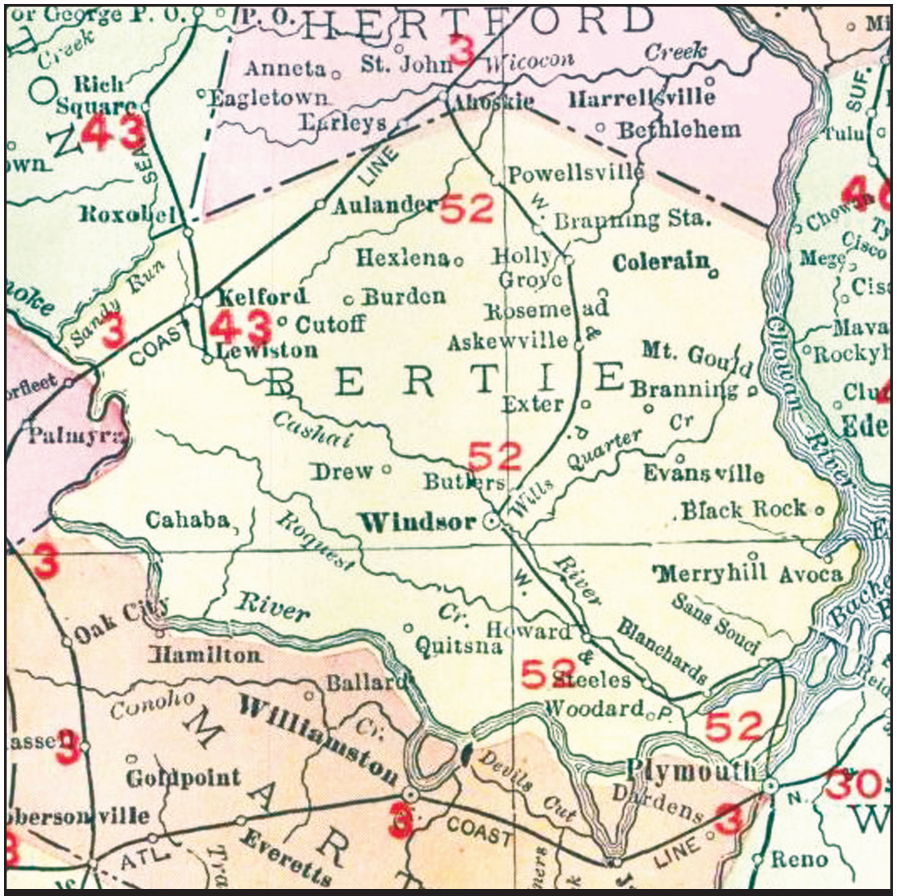
Evansville appears as a community along the line on several maps (see Figures 5, 6, and 9) from around 1900. However, it is absent from the 1918 *Soil Map* used as the basis for the county-wide map on page 1. The US GenWeb website, at <https://www.ncgenweb.us/bertie/towns.htm> explains: "Evansville is now known as Pine Ridge community. There was a post office there as late as the 1910's. It's ca. 3 miles south of Perrytown, ca. 3 miles east of Todds Cross, ca. 7 miles southwest of Colerain." This corresponds to the region around the modern-day junction of Pine Ridge Road and Highway 45.

Farther north, another community was known, at that time, as Branning. Figures 5 and 6 suggest that a branch line to Colerain left the mainline a short distance north of Branning. That junction point was on the property of the heirs of Jeremiah M. Perry, who died in 1884. His heirs sued, unsuccessfully, to keep the railroad from crossing their property. Figure 13 is a map which was filed in Bertie County Deed Book 86, page 578. See also Figure 14 and the description which accompanied that photograph. It seems reasonable to believe that Branning was near the current location of Perrytown.

Continuing northwest, the line passed through Rosemead as is apparent in Figures 5, 6, and 9. Historically, Rosemead was located at the junction of Nowell Farm Road and Morris Ford Road, although some recent maps show it farther south, at the junction of Morris Ford Road and Perrys School Road.

The 1901 *Manual* mentioned that the railroad operated a 25-mile line between Windsor and Ahoskie and had 20 miles of branches to timber. It had seven locomotives. The Windsor to Ahoskie mileage was reduced to 22 miles in the report that appeared in the 1905 *Manual*. It remained 22 miles thereafter for several years.

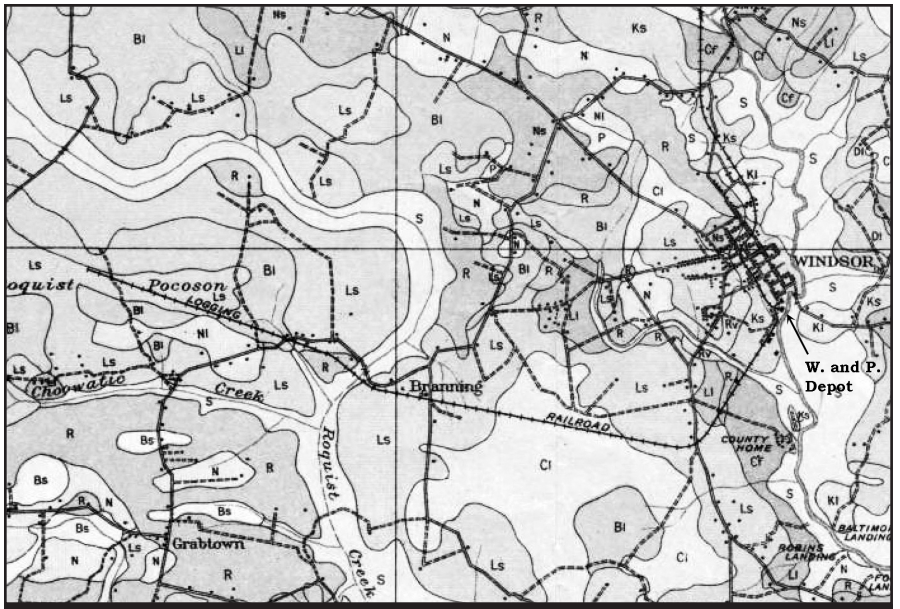
The March 10, 1905 *Railroad Gazette* declared: "Wellington & Powellsville. – This road, which runs from Ahoskie, N. C., to Windsor, 24 miles, has been extended from Windsor southward to Plymouth, 29 miles." Figure 15 is part of a



15 1906 Map Includes Unbuilt Windsor-Plymouth Line

1906 Rand, McNalley & Company map of North Carolina which purports to show that extension. However, this 29-mile right-of-way was not actually constructed. Within Bertie County, in editions from 1905, 1906 and 1907, the *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners of North Carolina* lists either eighteen or twenty total miles of track for the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad.

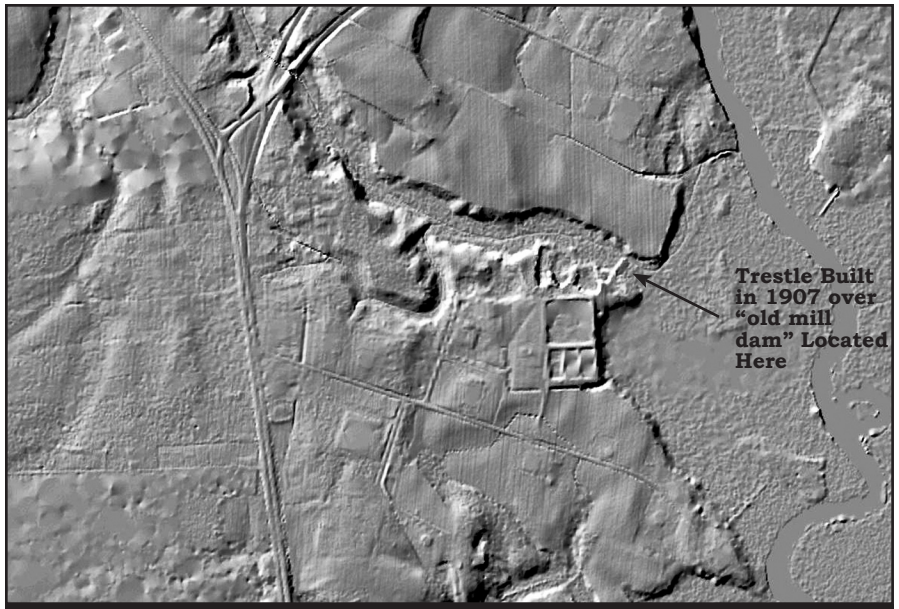
What did occur in 1905 was that the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad established a wharf and warehouse



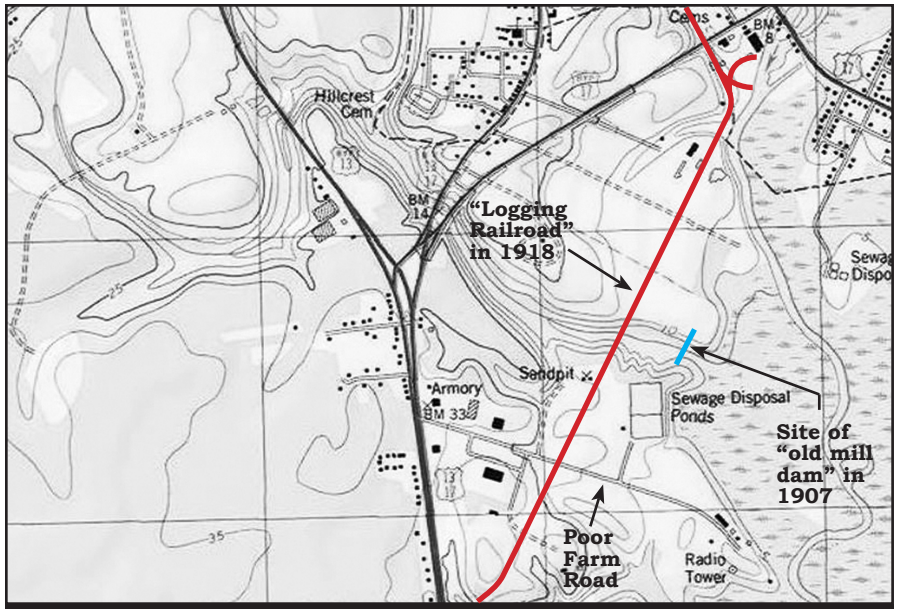
16 1918 “Logging Railroad” West of Windsor

at Sans Souci. The April 20, 1905 *Windsor Ledger* reported: “Ordered that the permission be and is hereby granted the Wellington & Powellsville Railroad Company, to build and maintain in the waters of the Cashie River a wharf and warehouse thereon immediately fronting the public road terminating at Sans Souci, for the purpose of freightage provided, however, that said wharf shall not interfere with the crossing of the river at said landing, or with navigation in said river, or at said landing.”

Figure 16 is a part of the 1918 *Soils Survey Map* of Bertie County which displays the area west of Windsor. A right-of-way labelled “Logging Railroad” is visible along with a community named Branning. That place was almost certainly named for the Branning Manufacturing Company, which controlled the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad. The W. and P. is known to have constructed a new track leading to the area south of Windsor in 1907,



17 LiDAR Ground Image in the Area of Windsor



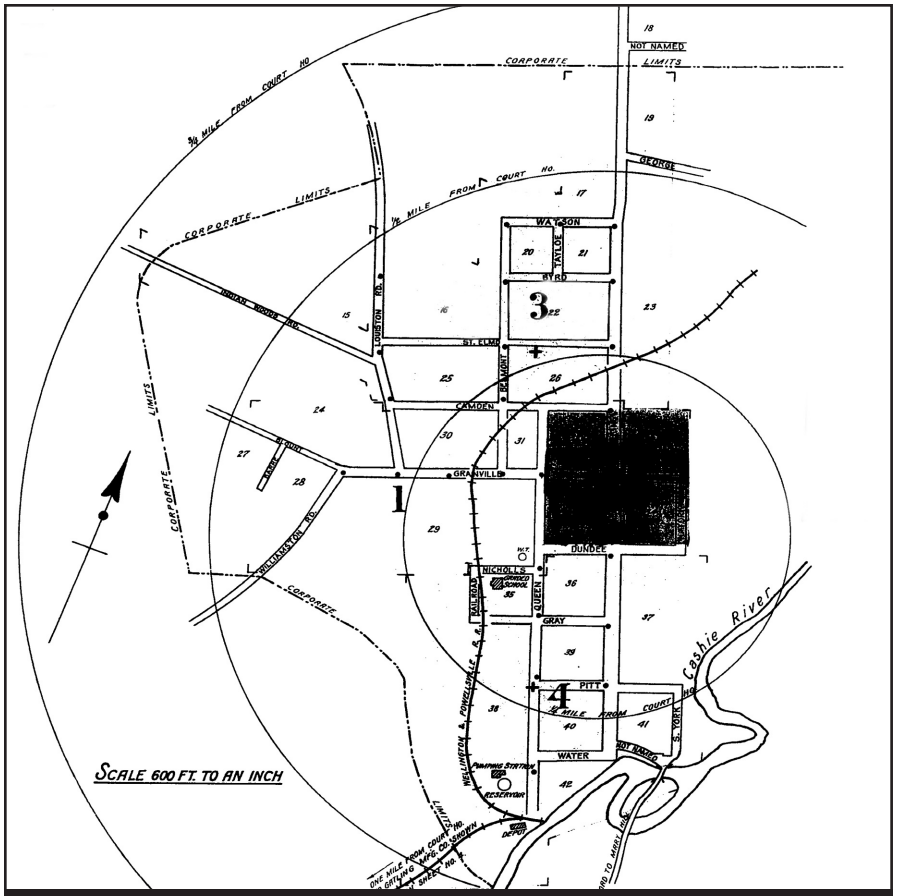
18 Modern Topographical Map in the Area of Windsor

for the July 11, 1907 *Windsor Ledger* reported: "The W. and P. is now building a trestle across the old mill dam between Windsor and Austin." The referenced "old mill" was the one previously used by the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad Company. Logically, the new trestle would have been used to access timber south of Windsor.

Figure 17 is a recent LiDAR ground image of the area previously known as Austin. Still visible is a remnant of the dam referenced in the preceding paragraph. It was constructed in the mid-1880s, creating a mill pond for use by the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad. The track visible in Figure 16 does not appear to have passed over the precise place where this "old mill dam" was located. Instead, as it travels from Windsor to the southwest, it passes to the west of the position of "the old mill dam." The "Logging Railroad" visible in Figure 16 does connect to south end of the W. and P. mainline in the area of the Windsor depot (see Figure 19).

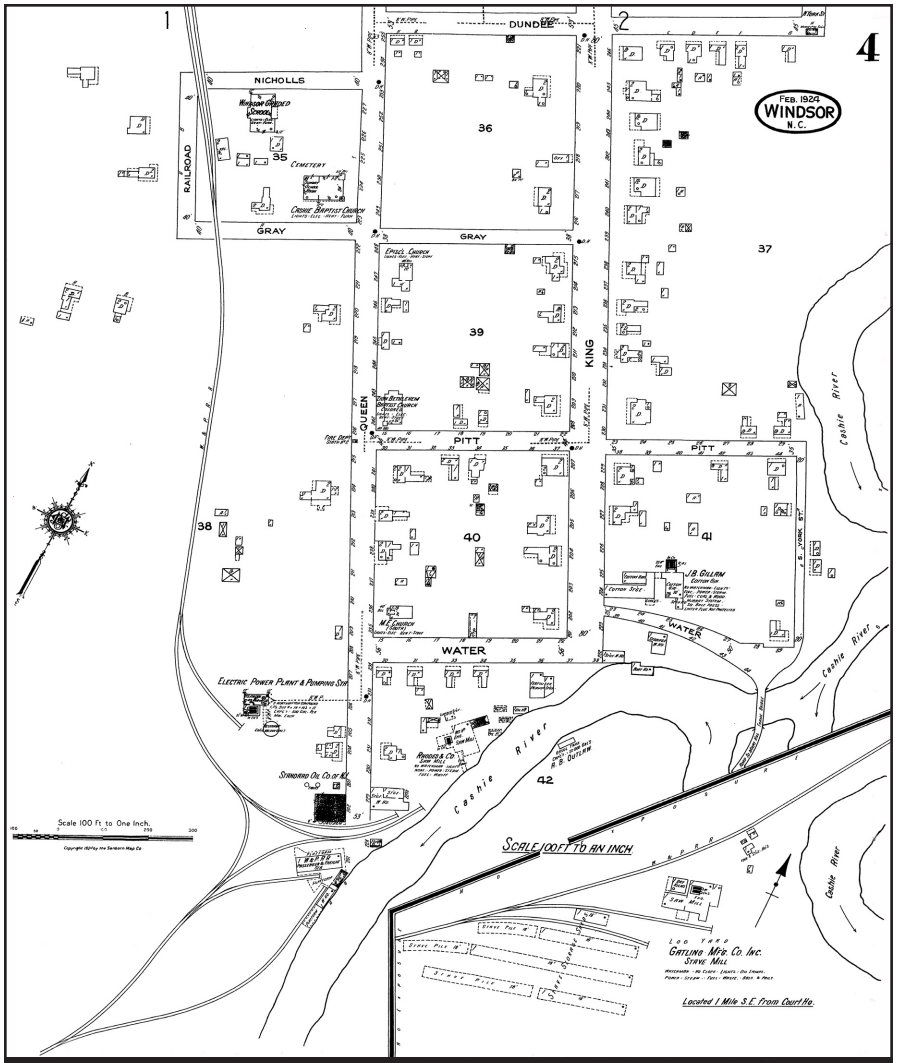
Figure 18 is a modern topographical map of the same area depicted in Figure 17. The path used by the "Logging Railroad" seen in Figure 16 has been added by the author. The position of "the old mill dam" can also be seen.

Figures 19 and 20 present parts of the February 2024 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps of Windsor, NC. Figure 19 comes from Sheet 1, which displays the entire town. The track heading to the southwest from Windsor is said to lead to "Gatling Mfg. Co." The website <https://www.ncgenweb.us/bertie/industry.htm> reveals that Edward Liles Gatling opened a mill on the Cashie River about 1908. Originally called the Windsor Manufacturing Company, the business eventually was known as the Gatling Manufacturing Company. The Gatling mill was located at the southeast end of modern-day Coulbourn Lumber Road. Gatling sold his mill to the Coulbourn Lumber Company in 1928.



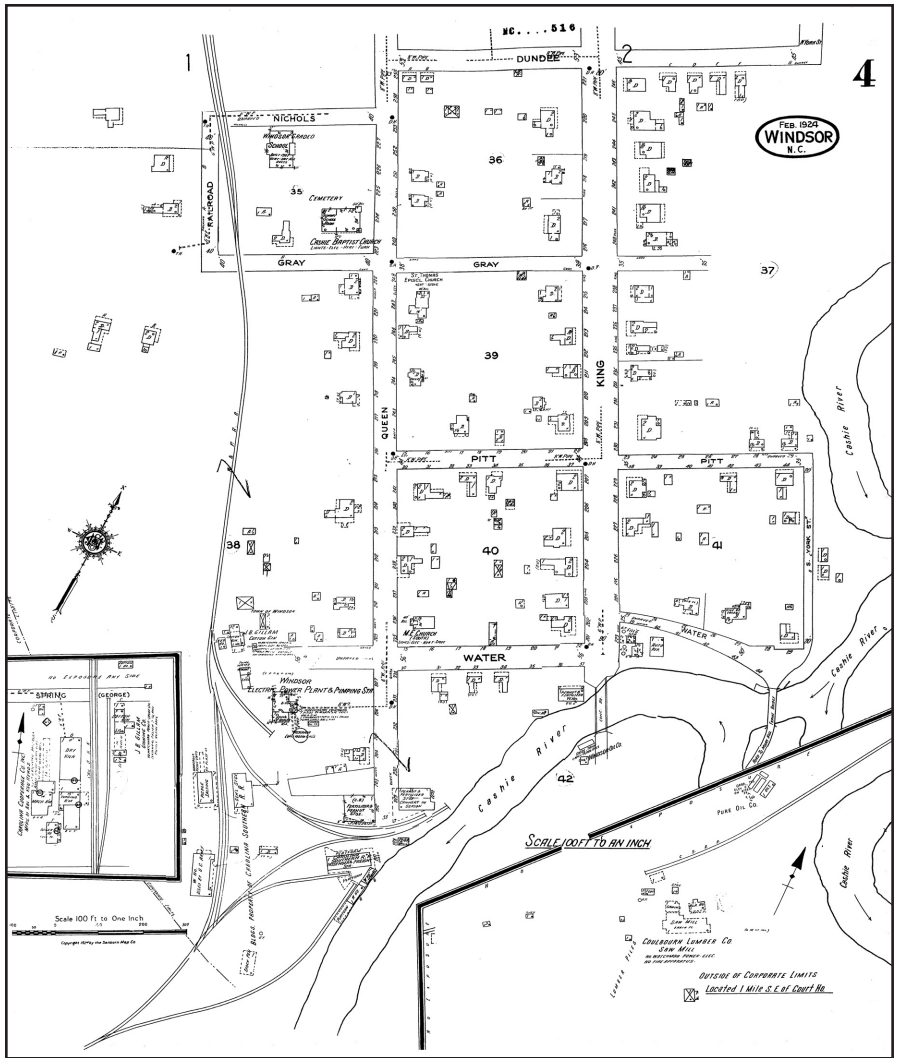
19 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Map of Windsor

Figure 20 is part of sheet 4 of the February 2024 Sanborn map. The Wellington and Powellsville Railroad's track plan near the Windsor depot is visible. The Gatling Manufacturing Company's mill can be seen in the lower right corner of the map. That mill was located along the "Logging Railroad" identified in Figure 16 and probably received timber harvested from along that line. The Gatling mill may also have sawed logs brought there over the W. and P. Railroad.



20 1924 Sanborn Map of Windsor, Sheet 4

The Wellington and Powellsville Railroad became insolvent in the 1920s and was sold at auction on February 16, 1926. The new owner was the Carolina Southern Railway, which widened the preexisting right-of-way to standard-gauge. Figure 21 comes from Sheet 4 of the 1933 revision



21 1933 Revision of 1924 Sanborn Map at Windsor

of the Sanborn map presented in Figure 20. Here, the depot is labelled "Carolina Southern R. R. Passenger & Freight Sta." In the lower right corner, the Gatling mill has been replaced by "Coulbourn Lumber Co. Saw Mill."

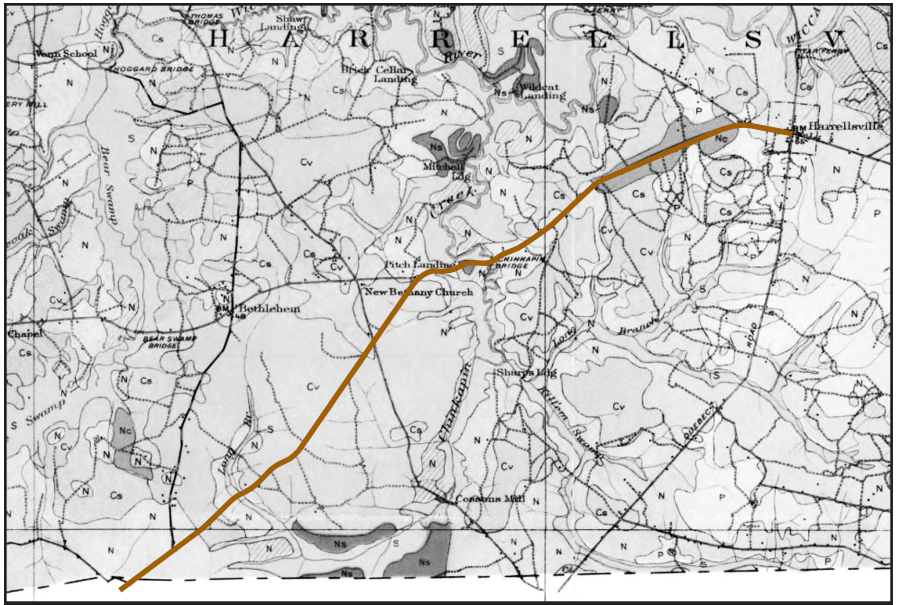
22 1950 Carolina Southern Rwy #100 at Ahoskie

Figure 22 is a 1950 postcard image of Carolina Southern Railway Engine #100 at Ahoskie. A range of factors led to gradually decreasing traffic on this railroad. Eventually, the entire line was abandoned in 1961.

The **Chowan and Aulander Railroad** was incorporated on March 4, 1893. It was authorized to "build or construct and operate the line of a railroad from some point at or on the Chowan River near the town of Harrellsville, North Carolina, to some point at or near Aulander, Bertie County, North Carolina." However, the line did not go into operation until almost a decade later. The 1905 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* reports that the Chowan and Aulander Railroad was a standard-gauge (56.5-inches) logging line which opened in 1902.

The 1905 *Manual* also mentioned that it had terminals at Harrellsville, in Hertford County, and Aulander, in Bertie County. In addition, the line operated a 24-mile mainline and reported a total of 27.75 miles of track. The right-of-way displayed in Figure 23 was added by the author. That figure maps out the route of the Chowan and Aulander Railroad in Hertford County. P. D. Camp, who resided at Franklin, Virginia was president of this railroad, which was a subsidiary of the Camp Manufacturing Company. That business was a major producer of finished lumber and had its central office at Franklin.

The railroad's management planned for future expansion as early as 1903. The company's charter was revised on March 6, changing the authorized terminals to: "some point at or on the Chowan River or Wiccacon Creek, a tributary of said river near the town of Harrellsville, North Carolina, to some point at or near Aulander, Bertie County, North Carolina, or to some point in said county at or near Roanoke River . . ."



23 Chowan and Aulander Railroad in Hertford County

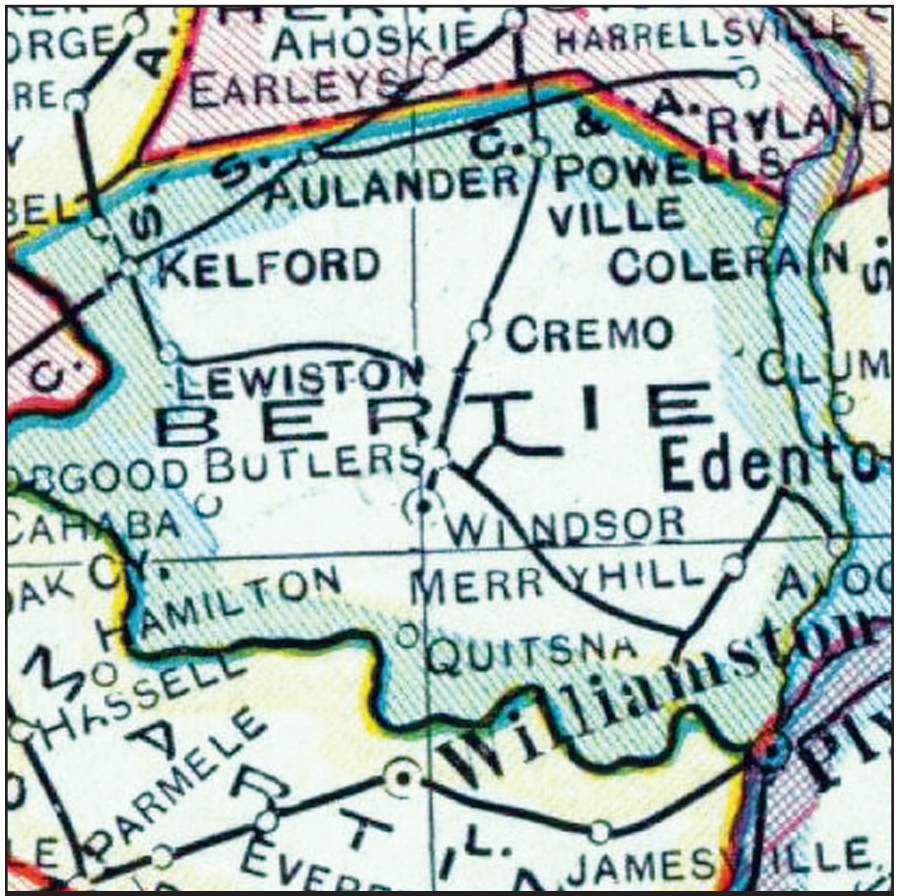
Several 1905 right-of-way deeds recorded in Bertie County Deed Book 137 confirm that the railroad was actively planning to expand operations. Lewiston would be a new, western terminal. On page 143, Jacob Sharroen granted a right-of-way over his property which was bounded, on one side, by "the Roanoke & Tar River Ry." That line had entered Lewiston in 1888. On page 148, Lewis Bazemore, a resident of Snakebite Township when the 1900 Federal census was taken, granted the Chowan and Aulander Railroad a right-of-way "which is now staked out." This meant that the right-of-way had been surveyed but not yet built upon. In Woodville Township, on page 150, from Charles W. Joyner and on page 152, from J. G. Williams, similar staked out rights-of-way were obtained.

The *Eighth Annual Report of the North Carolina Corporation Commission for the Year Ending December 31, 1906, Compilations from Railroad Returns Are For the Year Ending June 30, 1906* states, under "Property Operated," "From Chowan River to Lewiston (lumber road) .....30 miles." Although this could be interpreted to mean that the company operated a continuous line of railroad between those two points, such a direct connection could not be identified by the author on available maps published during the first decade of the twentieth century, or by examination of aerial photographs from the 1950s. For that reason, the Chowan and Aulander Railroad is depicted upon the map on page 1 as two disconnected segments. In the following year's version (1907) of the *Annual Report*, the "Property Operated" was "From Lewiston to near Cashie River (lumber road) .....13 miles." By then, the original right-of-way, from the Harrellsville area to Aulander, had been abandoned.

Terminal locations remained unchanged in subsequent yearly versions of the *Annual Report* through 1910, which was the last year in which the Chowan and Aulander Railroad appeared in that publication. The 1910 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* mentions that: "In May, 1910, the company stated that the charter of this company would be cancelled in the near future."

Figure 24 is part of a 1909 Cram map. Note that it displays only the path of the Chowan and Aulander Railroad as it existed in 1905. However, by the time this map was published in 1909, the line was operating exclusively over its new right-of-way between Lewiston and Butlers. Figure 25 is part of a 1911 map of North Carolina produced by Geographical Publishing Company. Although the railroad was probably not in operation at the time, the terminals shown are accurate.

Figure 11 displays part of the Chowan and Aulander Railroad near Lewiston. Where it entered Lewiston, it reused part of the grade of the Cashie and Roanoke Railroad, which had been pulled up in November 1889.



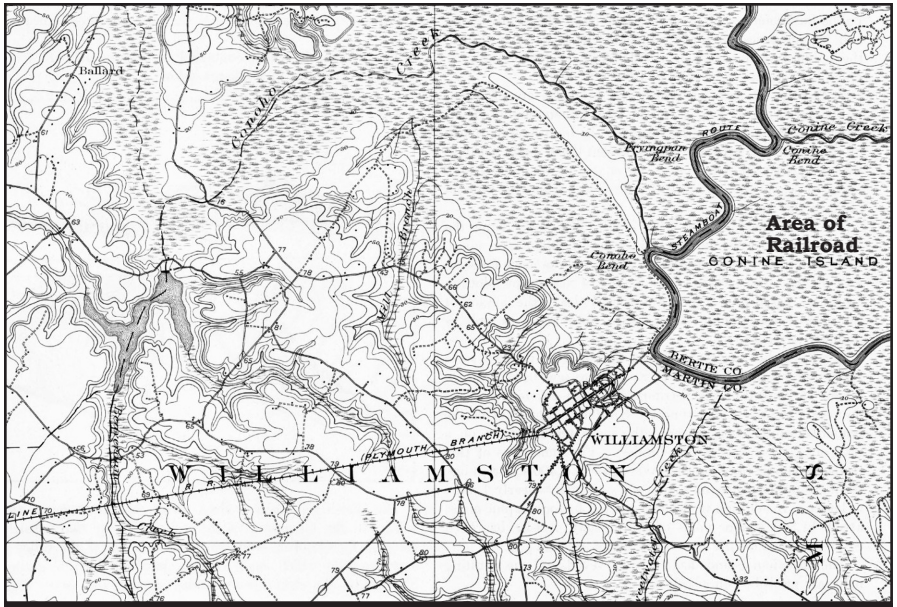
24 1909 Map-Two Segments of the C. and A. RR

The **Williamston Cooperage Company** was incorporated on August 20, 1912. In addition to making barrels, the company added a sawmill in 1915 to utilize wood not suitable for fabrication of headers (disk-shaped boards

25 1911 C. and A. RR between Lewiston and Butlers

used to seal the top and bottom of a barrel). The April 15, 1915 issue of Williamston's *The Enterprise* reported "The Williamston Cooperage Co. will erect a saw mill in the near future near its present plant. This will utilize some timbers not used in headings, and will prove a profitable investment."

The company is known to have operated a logging railroad in the Conine Swamp area of Bertie County. The October 29, 1915 issue of *The Enterprise* mentioned the line in an accident report: "One of the saddest deaths which has happened here in years, was that of Mr. Paul Smithwick, who died at 2 o'clock on Wednesday from injuries received from being run over by the log train of the Williamston Cooperage Company, which operates in the Corenine [Conine] Swamp on the Bertie side of the Roanoke River, opposite the Company's plant." The accident happened "one and a half mile back in the swamp . . ."



26 1902 Topographical Map of Williamston Quadrangle

Figure 26 is part of the 1902 USGS Topographical map of the Williamston Quadrangle. The logging railroad would have been located in the area labelled Conine Island. No sign of it could be discerned by the author on 1950s-era aerial photographs of that region.

Starting in 1914, the Williamston Cooperage Company began to buy timberland in Bertie County. Transactions in 1914 were recorded in Bertie County Deed Book 180, page 517; and Book 212, page 135. Two further purchases occurred in 1917 and were recorded in Book 196, page 213; and Book 212, page 144.

Scant information is available about a tram railroad that was used in the region south of Lewiston in the 1880s and 1890s. In an 1881 document, recorded in Bertie County Deed Book XX, page 570, S. H. McRae sold timberland, a tram road, and a logging outfit to **Samuel J. Meakin**. The properties were located in Roquist Pococin and Roquist Swamp. One was known as "Cow Island." Included in the sale were six "trucks," the harnesses used with them, and four mules, as well as all of McRae's "right title and interest rights and privileges in and to the tram road from the swamp to Flag Run."

The 1889 edition of *The Official Railway List* included "Lewiston – Sam'l J. Meakin" on page 223. However, the publication contained no further information about the Meakin operation.

In 1893, Meakin contracted with Kenneth Bazemore, Edward Bazemore, and William Morriss to remove cypress timber from properties in Cashie and Wartom [Wahtom] Swamps. Meakin was allowed to construct tramways to access that timber. Those contracts were recorded in Deed Book 80, pages 7-10.

S. J. Meakin was the grantee of property named in a January 20, 1898 deed which involved the transfer of real estate at Rice's Mill, approximately five miles north of Windsor. Tram roads were not mentioned in that document, which was recorded in Deed Book 96, page 263. The February 17, 1898 *Bertie Ledger* reported "Mr. S. A. Meakin, of Lewiston, was in town Monday. He will begin moving his mill to Rice's mill next week."

In 1902, the **Roanoke Railroad & Lumber Company** began to develop a logging line in Merry Hill Township. Eventually, it reached timber in the Buckleberry Tract and even farther west (Bertie County Deed Book 130, page 533). It crossed the road between Merry Hill and Cashoke (Deed Book 115, page 394) and, farther east, Black Walnut Swamp was a bound of property logged by this grade. The right-of-way was displayed on the portion of the 1909 *Railroad Map of North Carolina* presented in Figure 27.

Frank Hitch was the grantee of timber rights recorded in three documents during 1885 (Bertie County Deed Book 55, page 550 and Deed Book 56, pages 209 and 243). From bounds mentioned in these documents, it is evident that Hitch's railroad was used to cut timber in Roquist Pocosin, and crossed Indian Woods Road somewhere between "Roquist and Grab Town." Transported logs were headed to Hitch's sawmill across the Roanoke River at Hamilton.

The 1889 edition of *Poor's manual of Railroads* reported, under the heading of **Hamilton RR. and Lumber Co.**, that "The material in the Hitch RR. in Bertie Co. has been taken up and used in the construction of this road."

27 1909 RR Map of NC-RR&LCo South of Merry Hill